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DIGEST OF PERIODICAL LITERATURE

Individualism and Democracy

The publication of two new books by Professor John Dewey and a revised edition of a third is stirring the currents of educational thought. As usual, the majority echo and praise, without attempting to evaluate the doctrine. Not so Professor Bagley, of the University of Illinois. In a long editorial in the September issue of *School and Home Education* he sets forth what he believes to be the danger lurking in Dr. Dewey's theories of education. Recognizing the great contribution to education which Dr. Dewey has made in his advocacy of freedom, interest, and activity, he finds nevertheless a tendency to a pernicious individualism bound to be fatal to democracy. The individual must be able to think clearly with his fellows on common issues, and he must be willing to sacrifice himself for the common good. The importance of this Dr. Dewey, in his persistent opposition to learning through the assimilation of the experiences of others by means of recorded knowledge, obscures—this in spite of the fact that he has derived a large part of his own educational ideas by reading Rousseau. American children, Dr. Bagley thinks, are not "so dangerously addicted to blind obedience as to imperil their originality."

Measuring Efficiency

The current interest in educational measurements waxes, if publication may be accepted as evidence. To the *Pedagogical Seminary* for September, W. F. Tidyman contributes "A Critical Study of Rice's Investigation of Spelling Efficiency." Mr. Rice, the writer recalls, was a pioneer in the field, and, though less exact in his methods than others who come later, deserves much credit for starting needed reforms. His conclusions must be regarded as merely suggestive and tentative.

Recently attempts have been made to measure results in composition as well as in spelling. In *School and Society* for August 7 Superintendent William E. Stark, of Hackensack, New Jersey, presents a highly interesting account of a study dealing with two such problems. The first was "to obtain a general estimate of the ability in composition of the pupils in the eighth grade of a public-school system"; the second, "to

compare the quality of eighth-grade compositions written under the same conditions at an interval of three years." Compositions on the topic "A Day of My Life" were ranked by several teachers, both with and without the use of the Hillegas-Thorndike and Harvard-Newton scales, and the results were compared from various points of view. It appeared that the rating of an individual paper by an individual judge must be used with caution, but that teachers with experience in teaching children of a given grade tend to agree; also that each judge tends to maintain his own standard from day to day. Perhaps the most significant result obtained was the discovery of the tendency of one teacher to differ widely from all of the others in her estimates.

A more extensive investigation is that carried on during the last six years in the elementary schools of Boise, Idaho, and reported in the *Elementary School Journal* for September by Gertrude Earhart and Jennie Small, the supervisors in charge. The object was to get a more exact measure of and a more effective method of dealing with common errors in English speech and in the mechanics of writing. Teachers were asked to observe with care for a given period all mistakes of the pupils in the schoolroom and on the playground and report. These were classified, the instruction focused, and new observations made. By the continuance of this method improvement has gradually grown more satisfactory. The plan for measuring formal aspects of written work was similar. Tests made in accordance with the course of study showed that little progress was being made in the correct use of capitals, punctuation, etc. Instruction was then more carefully systematized and steady and almost uniform gains from grade to grade obtained.

Magazines in the Classroom

The use of standard weekly and monthly magazines is steadily increasing and three of the leading weeklies have prepared for free distribution reprints of articles on the subject to guide the beginner. These are the *Literary Digest*, the *Outlook*, and the *Independent*. In *Education* for September also will be found an outline for "Magazine Study in Literature Classes." A recent writer in the *Nation* (New York), however, Mr. Homer E. Woodbridge, has his doubts on the subject. Under date of September 5 he writes that he has used the *Atlantic Monthly* in his composition classes, but feels that the material in a single number is less valuable than in a book of selected masterpieces, and that, unless the habit of reading the magazine regularly is established by its use,

the time had better be given to books. He inquires whether teachers who have had three or four years of experience can throw any light on the question.

Theories of Expression

"As a preliminary to the task of investigating the basis of teaching oral expression," writes C. H. Woolbert in the *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* for July, "it ought to be of value to publish, first, a few opinions." He then proceeds to make a very suggestive analysis of current systems, which he names as follows: (*a*) The Rush "Elements" system; (*b*) Imitation; (*c*) "Think the thought;" and (*d*) the Paraphrase system. He reaches the conclusion that "All are needed; all are useful. But no one by itself is a system complete."

Et Tu, Thesaure

Mr. W. H. Sanders, of Lacrosse Normal School, has been inspecting the "finished product" of twelve years of schooling and finds it "helpless in the presence of difficulties that inevitably arise in the most ordinary affairs of life." Whether ability to use the guide words and the key line in a particular unabridged dictionary should be counted as desperately necessary as Mr. Sanders seems to think is perhaps debatable. At any rate he makes out a pretty strong indictment in the columns of the *Educational Review* for September against one hundred and twenty-five representatives from forty different high schools in his vicinity. One wonders whether Mr. Sanders exerted himself in his six weeks' course to save the situation.

Reading from the Inside

The title above heads the first of a series of articles on "Reading and Teaching Reading" from the pen of Miss Mary B. Fontaine which are appearing in the *West Virginia School Journal*. Miss Fontaine seeks the remedy for lifeless reading and finds it in the possibility of helping children to a vivid realization of the meaning of the words on the page before they try to read them aloud. This point of view is made clear and convincing by means of concrete illustrations drawn from the reading-books of the schools. The series began in August and will continue through the year.